



## SIDSCOS

### Small Island Developing States - Civil Society Organizations (SIDS-CSOs)

## Island States Campaign

### World Alliance for Mercury-Free Dentistry

### The Benefits of Mercury-Free Fillings to SIDS and Other Island States

To: The Secretariat, Minamata Convention on Mercury

The Island States campaign of the World Alliance for Mercury-Free Dentistry is run from Port Louis, Mauritius. We work in Small Island Developing States (SIDS) and other island jurisdictions to accelerate the transition to mercury-free dentistry, and we have projects working with CSOs in each of the cluster areas of island states: the Pacific Ocean, the Indian Ocean, and the Caribbean Sea.

#### **I. The environmental danger of dental mercury in limited-space societies makes the transition to mercury-free dentistry essential.**

For Island States, dental amalgam poses a major environmental and environmental health risk, for three reasons.

- First, limited land space means proper storage of dental mercury waste is well-nigh impossible. Even if it were economically feasible to undertake amalgam waste management – which we doubt, because of the high and ongoing costs of separator installation, maintenance, collection, and enforcement – *there is nowhere to store large quantities of mercury amalgam waste.*
- Second, the diet of islanders is almost always built around fish and such other seafood. But amalgam's elemental mercury can convert to methylmercury and contaminate this important source of nutrition. The mercury from dental amalgam going into fish is called a “secondary poisoning” by SCHER, the European Union Committee of Scientists, who studied amalgam's harms.
- Third, dental amalgam is always imported, not manufactured locally, and can be the single largest source of mercury on the islands. To reduce mercury pollution, switching to mercury-free dentistry has huge environmental benefits.



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Thus mercury-free fillings offer particular benefits to Island States.

## **II. Island States are finding alternatives economically feasible and technically feasible.**

Two Island States no longer use amalgam at all

- By order of its president, the self-governing territory of New Caledonia stopped all amalgam use in September 2019; use of amalgam is illegal.
- Via voluntary agreement of its dentists and the government, St. Kitts and Nevis Islands ended all amalgam use.

Other Island States are taking major steps to transition to mercury-free dentistry:

- In 2014, the Mauritius Ministry of Health and Quality of Life ended the use of amalgam for children under age 10 and for pregnant women. See UN Environmental Programme, “Promoting Dental Amalgam Phase-Down Measures Under the Minamata Convention and Other Initiatives, For ‘Especially Women, Children and, Through Them, Future Generations’, Workshop Report” (2018), <https://mercuryfreedentistry.files.wordpress.com/2018/06/workshop-report.pdf>, p. 29; “Inventory of Mercury Releases in Mauritius” (2014), [http://health.govmu.org/English/Departments-Hospitals/Departments/Documents/Hg%20Inventory%20Report%20\(1\).pdf](http://health.govmu.org/English/Departments-Hospitals/Departments/Documents/Hg%20Inventory%20Report%20(1).pdf), p. 19.
- Madagascar ended amalgam use in public programs.
- Madagascar also ended use of amalgam in military hospitals.
- Surinam, a SIDS member, has lowered amalgam use to under 5% of all fillings.
- As announced at COP3, Guyana, also a SIDS member, has a plan to phase out imports of amalgam, which will, at some point, end its use, since amalgam is not manufactured there.



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Therefore, in each regional cluster of Island States – Pacific, Indian Ocean, Caribbean – governments are taking major steps to transition to mercury-free dentistry. These actions – either to end amalgam entirely or to end its use in particular programs or to end its use for particular subpopulations – demonstrate that, in Island States, the amalgam alternatives are technically and also environmentally feasible.

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